

Is The Documentary On Mermaids Real? Scientists Say Animal Planet's 'Mermaids: The New Evidence' Is Hoax [EXPERT INTERVIEW, VIDEO & POLL]

Amanda Schiavo X @SchiavoAmanda / May 30 2013, 13:01 PM EST



Animal Planet depicts a pod of mermaids traveling together (PHOTO: YOUTUBE.COM)

Last year the Animal Planet network ran a special called "Mermaids: The Body Found." The so called documentary had people believing that a team of scientists uncovered a new species living under the sea. The team believes they proved the existence of the mythical creature, the mermaid.

Over Memorial Day weekend Animal Planet ran another special called "Mermaids: The New Evidence." This interview with the head scientist on the team that discovered the mermaid is supposed to make viewers believe that the original documentary is real and that mermaids do exist.

The Animal Planet documentary has been proven to be a hoax. The film has an IMDB profile, which lists the actors who portrayed the documentary's scientists. Even the network admits the feature is largely science fiction.

The Mermaid film proposes a theory that an aquatic humanoid species evolved to live under water the same way modern humans evolved to live on land.

With the help of Dr. J Wilson White an assistant professor in the biology and marine biology department at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, the Latin Times was able to break down the scientific theories put forth in the mermaid film.

The mermaid special proposes the "Aquatic Ape Theory." This theory suggests that when the modern human began to evolve from apes millions of years ago the line diverged and some species took to land while others headed toward the sea.

The Animal Planet special suggests that the mermaid is a descendant of the aquatic ape. Dr. White told the Latin Times he has heard of this theory, it has been around a little over a century.

"To clarify the aquatic ape theory has been around for a century or so. It was not invented by Animal Planet," Dr. White said. "[This] hypothesis is not well supported. It is not supported by fossil evidence, and it doesn't actually do a good job of explaining why humans look the way we do today."

"Mermaids: The Body Found" suggests that these sea creatures have been around just as long as humans and still share some fundamental human characteristics such as hands and lungs. Dr. White says the process of evolution takes millions of years. Most people picture mermaids with the torso of a person and the tail of a fish. The Animal Planet special suggests that mermaids are more dolphin like than fish. The proposed mermaid can dive deep like a dolphin and hold its breath for long periods of time.

"Evolution takes a long time to make big changes," Dr. White said. "Whales began to diverge from land mammals something like 50 million years ago, and it took 10 million years to get something that looks like the modern whale. Mermaids are supposed to be radically different from humans in some very fundamental ways, e.g. gills instead of lungs."

"I find it extremely unlikely that evolution would produce a species that has lost lungs and essentially revolved gills in the span of only a few million years," Dr. White continued. "There is no example of a lineage making that transition."

Dr. White did not watch the Animal Planet special on Mermaids before his interview with the Latin Times. Dr. White was showed clips of the film and asked for his opinions about what the team of scientists in the film discovered on the beach.

"The only discovery I saw was the supposed cell phone video of the mermaid carcass discovered by the kids on the beach, Dr. White said. "But my basic opinion on things like this is that this is not the way legitimate scientific discoveries are announced."

"If these scientists have real evidence, they should write an article documenting everything, submit it to a journal and allow their peers to debate the merits of the case," he added.

One recurring theme in "Mermaids: The Body Found" is that governments, not just in the US but in South Africa as well are trying to cover up the existence of mermaids. Dr. White says that this goes to show how unreliable something like this film is. He told the Latin Times there is no reason for a cover up.

"This is the problem with a lot of conspiracy theories isn't it?" Dr. White asked. "Regardless of the questionable evolutionary biology, this is a clue that the Animal Planet program is fiction."

Do You Believe Mermaids Are Real?